

U.S. Department of Justice
Immigration and Naturalization Service
U.S. Border Patrol – McAllen Sector – Chief Jose E. Garza
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McAllen, Texas 78501



NEWS RELEASE

October 30, 2002

Border Patrol Agents Find Drowning Victim

Rio Grande River Claims Another Life

Mercedes, TX – Chief Patrol Agent Jose E. Garza, announces that Border Patrol Agents assigned to the Weslaco Station's Boat Patrol found an apparent drowning victim floating in the Rio Grande River yesterday evening.

At approximately 6:30 p.m., Agents patrolling the Rio Grande River discovered the apparent drowning victim floating in the river near the Mercedes, Texas Pump House. Agents believed that the person, described as a Hispanic male, probably drowned a few days earlier due to the condition of the body. The Hidalgo County Sheriffs Department and the Mercedes Fire Department were contacted to recover the victim's body from the river.

The Mercedes Fire Department recovered the victim's body from the river, with the assistance of the Hidalgo County Sheriffs Department and the Border Patrol's Boat Patrol. It is believed that the drowning victim is a Mexican National. The Mexican Consulate's Office in McAllen was contacted and appraised of the incident.

Last year, there were 30 reported deaths of persons believed to be immigrants in the McAllen Sector. 50% of those deaths were reported as drowning victims. The Rio Grande River's seemingly calm appearance is deceiving to persons entering its treacherous waters. The river has dangerous undercurrents and in some areas is covered with heavy vegetation both above and below the waters surface.

The areas of the river with heavy vegetation pose more dangers, in that anyone entering the river in these areas can easily become entangled in the vegetation. This occurred in the October 15, 2002 incident in Brownsville, Texas where an agent rescued a person from the river and then became entangled in the vegetation himself, causing him to become exhausted.

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